

Contributions

THE INFLUENCE OF MUSIC

LOUIS S. BAUMAN

Carlyle said, "May blessings be upon the head of Cadmus, the Phoenicians or whoever it was that invented books." We should like to ask greater blessings upon the head of the inventor of music, but cannot because music was never invented. Music was born in nature and God is its author. Song, song, we have everywhere,—one blessing that did not die with Eden.

"There's music in the sighing of a reed;
There's music in the gushing of a rill;
There's music in all things if men had ears."

Brook and ocean, breeze and storm, violet and oak, cricket and man—all nature everywhere sings today. And were it not for these songs in the air, men would be baser, women weaker, and earth more desolate,—O were it not for uplifting, strengthening, glorious song! Bovee was right when he said, "Music is the fourth great material want of our natures,—first food, then raiment, then shelter, then music." And barely had man been fed, clothed and sheltered until we read of one Jubal, "the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ," and since that day "the harp and the organ" have been potent factors in the civilization of man. Indeed, I know not whether we would be out of the darkness of barbarism were it not for "the harp and the organ." "And it came to pass when the evil spirit of God was upon Saul, that David took an harp and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." Music has never lost the power to refresh and drive the evil spirits out of men. Nothing lays a stronger, firmer grasp on the mind and heart of man than music. We see it persuading the rebellious babe to quiet slumber on its mother's bosom; we see it conquering and cooling the hot passions of men and women in the ceaseless swirl of the world. Yes,

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast,
To soften rocks or rend the knotted oak."

As Luther truly said, "Music is a discipline, and a mistress of order and good manners. She makes the people milder and gentler, more moral and more reasonable." Indeed you will notice that the happiest and most virtuous families are the families in which there is plenty of music. Gentle natures love music.

Perhaps nothing helps us bear up under the trials and sorrows of this life so much as does music. It is the "medicine of an afflicted mind,—a sweet sad measure is the balm of a wounded spirit." Are you in sorrow and trouble? Are you lonely and melancholy? Are there dark clouds hovering in the distance? Have you, like the captive He-

brew children, hung your harp on the willows and sat down by the rivers of Babylon to weep? Take down thy harp again. "Let music swell the breeze." Nothing can banish sorrow and soothe the troubled spirit like a glad, sweet song. See those old heroes, Paul and Silas, thrust into the darkest, gloomiest cell in that Phillipian prison with their feet fast in the stocks. Did they bewail their lot or sing "Hark! from the tomb a doleful sound," as if they expected their heads to go the next moment? No, not they. Perhaps none of us ever came nearer decapitation than they, but they sang "praises unto God." They sang until those cold walls shook, those prison doors burst, and the bands on their ankles were broken. In darkness and in trouble, sing! Nothing will more quickly shake the benighted walls of sorrow, burst open the prison doors of melancholy or break the shackles of loneliness. As with Paul and Silas, not only your own, but the bands of others may be loosed by your song. Did you ever notice how work grows lighter, and how care grows less around where somebody sings?

To this end it is impossible to over-estimate its power. Oratory may stir us to bursts of enthusiasm, poetry may inspire us to noble thoughts, art may momentarily melt us to tears; but, in the trying crisis of life,—in temptation, sorrow, sickness, and death, nothing sustains and soothes us like a sacred hymn. At the fall of Pemberton mills, in Lawrence, Mass., years ago, eighty people were entangled in the burning ruins. First came cries for help, then wails of agony, and when their hopeless position was seen, the doomed girls began to sing "Shall we gather at the river?" "Rock of Ages cleft for me," "Nearer my God to Thee," were strains that crept from among the ruins and were heard distinctly above the roar of the flames, soothing and quieting each in that awful hour until they died away at last to be sung by those voices no more on earth; for one by one the singers went to "sing on that beautiful shore, the melodious songs of the blest."

Nor can the persuasive power of sacred song be over-estimated. Years ago Jenny Lind sang that immortal composition, "Home, sweet home," in Castle Garden, N. Y., before twenty thousand people. Few in that vast multitude refrained from weeping. Every heart was touched and made better, purer, tenderer, by that one song. Cheeks for years untouched by tears were being washed with those dew drops of heaven. Many a boy in his first moral battle in life has been arrested and saved by the accidental hearing of some grand old hymn that "mother used to sing." God bless those old songs that "mother used to sing." One is worth a thousand of

some of our modern fizzle-bangs. "Hymns of utterance" are what we want, hymns that *say* something, hymns of adoration or thanksgiving, or petition, or confession, of trust or consecration,—hymns that appeal to the heart—these convert men. The last plea that the wayward can resist comes in song. How often the sermon leaves the sinner like Agrippa, "almost," while a following song leaves him as Paul would have him be, "altogether." The stony walls of the heart must fall when besieged by sacred song. The victorious church, the soul-saving church, is the church that sings.

A poor little blind girl sat in the door of her home singing, "There'll be no sorrow there, There'll be no sorrow there," when the ear of a man of the world, a man of wealth, in great trouble of mind caught the words, and he stopped and thought, "O where? I wonder where 'there'll be no sorrow.' I'd like to be there." Quickly the singer responded, "In heaven above, where all is love, there'll be no sorrow there." He sought peace with God and found it. Saved by a song! Saved by a song from the lips of a little blind girl. Others may be saved likewise. Why not try?

"I shot an arrow into the air
It fell to earth, I know not where;
For so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.
I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong
That it can follow the flight of a song?
Long, long after, in an old oak
I found the arrow still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end
I found again in the heart of a friend."

Music not only drives away gloom from the troubled spirit, not only does it break hardened hearts and melt them to tenderness and pity, but it encourages to vigorous resolves. Wellington's regiment of Highlanders at the battle of Waterloo began to waver in the face of that terrible storm of shot and shell. He ordered the bagpipes to be played and inspired by their national music, those heroes of old Scotland bounded forth with that wonderful determination that knows only victory or death, and won the battle. Brother, in the battle for God, does it seem you must retreat? Are you discouraged by foes without and foes within? Let the grand old battle hymns of God ring out above the tumult of the strife, and by them inspired, you will gain the day.

In ancient Tyrol, it was a custom for the women and children to go out in the evening and sing their national songs until their husbands, fathers and brothers, coming homeward after the day of toil, would answer them in song from the hills. Brother, labor on. Soon the night cometh and we can go home. Hear ye not already the national an-